DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 303 SO 014 630

AUTHOR Savitz, Fred R.; DiSibio, Robert A.
TITLE The Pedagogy of Concept Learning in the Elementary Grades: An Interdisciplinary Approach.
PUB DATE Feb 83
NOTE 27p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Community Development; *Concept Teaching; Diagnostic Teaching; Elementary Education; Independent Study; Individualized Instruction; Lesson Plans; Self Directed Groups; *Social Studies; Teacher Guidance; United States History; Urban Studies

ABSTRACT

Elementary teachers can use a 3-D approach (direct, divide, and diversity) to classroom instruction and management to teach concept-based lessons. Initially the teacher will "direct" an interactive learning process by diagnosing student needs and modifying subsequent learning tasks through the analysis of student feedback. On the basis of the diagnosis and feedback, the teacher will "divide" the children into an instructional group with which he/she will work directly. The remainder of the students will work independently. These students must select and complete activities that emerge from the third part of the approach, "diversity." The notion of diversity implies creative classroom instruction and management. The first sample lesson is designed to help children understand the concept of city, through processes such as comparing, analyzing, evaluating, generalizing, and direct involvement. The second lesson on community development introduces students to the people who populated the American city from 1865 to 1910. Provided for each sample lesson are an overview, objectives, the focusing event, and the engagement activity. (RM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED229303

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reprpduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Fred R. Savitz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE PEDAGOGY OF CONCEPT LEARNING IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

February, 1983

BY

Fred R. Savitz, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Education

Robert A. DiSibio, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Education

SP 014 630

PRE-THOUGHTS

How many times have you heard a youngster ask you, "Why do we have to learn social sciences?" And when you ponder the question and think about a reply, what do you say? Do you mention facts, explain government, stress citizenship, describe geography? And does the youngster respond, nevertheless, with an unsatisfied shrug? Perhaps a conceptual technique that is student-centered and experience-laden will provide you with a more fulfilling answer if you hear the question again.

We propose a strategem consisting of three components, namely, aims, focusing events, and engagement activities. Individually, aims are intended to provide a direction toward the acquisition and mastery of skills. Focusing events offer a stimulus generated to impel youngsters toward skill development. Engagement activities are extended processes designed to introduce, refine, or master those skills.

Our strategem depends upon an eclectic, inquiry approach to learning the social sciences. Specific factual material, therefore, will appear infrequently, if at all, within its context. The teacher, the class, and the curriculum determine the content; the flexibility of the design adapts it to any elementary grade.

Students who possess minimal specific knowledge of the social sciences will learn to appreciate the value as both individually unique and equally important disciplines of study. As a conceptual strategem the instructional approach is conjunctive.

This means that many, many ideas and their inter-relationships can be used to present a single concept. Peter Martorella, a leading authority in concept mastery, describes the process of forming a conjunctive concept in his textbook,

THE 3-D CLASSROOM: DIRECT, DIVIDE AND DIVERSIFY

> Bear in mind that when students are asked to wait with nothing to do, four things can happen and three of them are bad: The student may remain interested and attentive; he may become bored or fatigued, losing his interest and ability to concentrate; he may become distracted or start day dreaming; or he may actively misbehave (Good, 1972).

We know that some teachers can manage a classroom smoothly, while other teachers can barely present an assignment. We know that some teachers facilitate the movement of groups with the apparent ease of a symphony orchestra conductor, while other teachers can hardly arrange an ensemble. We detect strengths and deficiencies in ourselves and among our colleagues daily, and we always hope to find strategies for enhancing our skills as professional educators. Among the questions we implore are: How can we organize our materials effectively? Do we have a reliable schedule of daily and weekly activities? What should we plan in order to assure a satisfactory level of achievement for all of the children in our classes?

Let us assume that you are teaching in a self-contained, primary or intermediate year classroom situated within a conventional physical plant. Further, suppose that your class consists of from thirty to thirty-five youngsters of a heterogeneous mix ethnically, racially, and intellectually. Given such a challenge, you intend to implement a variety of grouping procedures for the purpose of individualizing instruction in such disciplines as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. You can visualize an ideal classroom, divided into any number of groups of youngsters who are eagerly working at independent tasks, while the teacher and a separate group of learners are focusing intently on a specific skill to be mastered. Now that you have fixed this image in your mind, you are ready to convert it into reality by taking a 3-D approach, that is, by directing, dividing, and diversifying.

In designing the 3-D approach to classroom instruction and management, we have adapted a three dimensional model from two dimensional prototypes and structured our own design for planning and perceiving the classroom learning process. One two-dimensional model in particular, the Beginning Teacher Evaluation System (BTES) delineates the procedure that represents our primary concern, i.e., the time spent by students on pursuing learning tasks (ASCD Update, 1980).

3-D takes the BTES model, which illustrates a flow from teaching process to classroom learning to student achievement. 3-D builds upon it as the foundation of a learning pyramid which

embodies continuous teacher-student interaction. Initially, the teacher will DIRECT an interactive learning process by diagnosing student needs and modifying subsequent learning tasks through the analysis of student feedback. Such feedback may appear in the form of written evaluations, standardized test scores, or informally derived assessments of progress.

When diagnosis and feedback operate correctly, the outcome will materialize in that segment of the pyramid which we call DIVIDE. At this junction, the teacher will identify a number of youngsters who comprise an instructional group, assigned to work directly with the teacher on a specific instructional skill. In the meantime, other groups of youngsters will assemble as indepently functioning task groups. Their responsibilities consist of selecting and completing activities that emerge from the third junction of the 3-D pyramid, DIVERSIFY.

In our context, the notion of diversity implies creative classroom instruction and management. As the teacher monitors the progress of the instructional learning group and the independent task groups, close attention is paid to the availability of a wide range of mastery activities. These independent learning tasks will be accessible for youngsters to pursue as the learners flow from instructional group to independent groups. Furthermore, there will exist such a diversity of activities as to engage the efforts of a youngster in two ways: The learner will select activities that

appeal aesthetically, physically, and intellectually; the duration of activities will be sufficiently brief to enable the coordinated flow from independent task groups back to the instructional learning group. Above all, we assert that to diversify is to escape from tradition; the elements of diversification are a departure from the tradition bound approach of workbook usage, ditto handouts, and commercial time fillers. Activities, although at first glance finite, can easily be recycled through judicious monitoring and feedback analysis in order to encompass a nearly infinite array of content or subject matter.

The practical application of the theoretical 3-D model illustrates a three dimensional approach to managing instruction in a conventional setting. By directing learning strategies which appropriately follow careful diagnosis, the teacher will be able to engage youngsters in productive activities. The class can readily be divided into units consisting of an instructional learning group and independent task groups, as a broad range of activities assures ease in monitoring and evaluating student progress.

With a concern for sustaining the interest and productivity of your class on a daily basis, as well as on a subject to subject transition, you will certainly attend to maintaining a supply of activities that will initially engage your pupils in a learning activity. Of course, the instructional learning group will become involved in skill development tasks mandated by the school curriculum. Likewise, feedback from this group is readily obtained from standardized tests, teacher made tests, informal dialogue, or

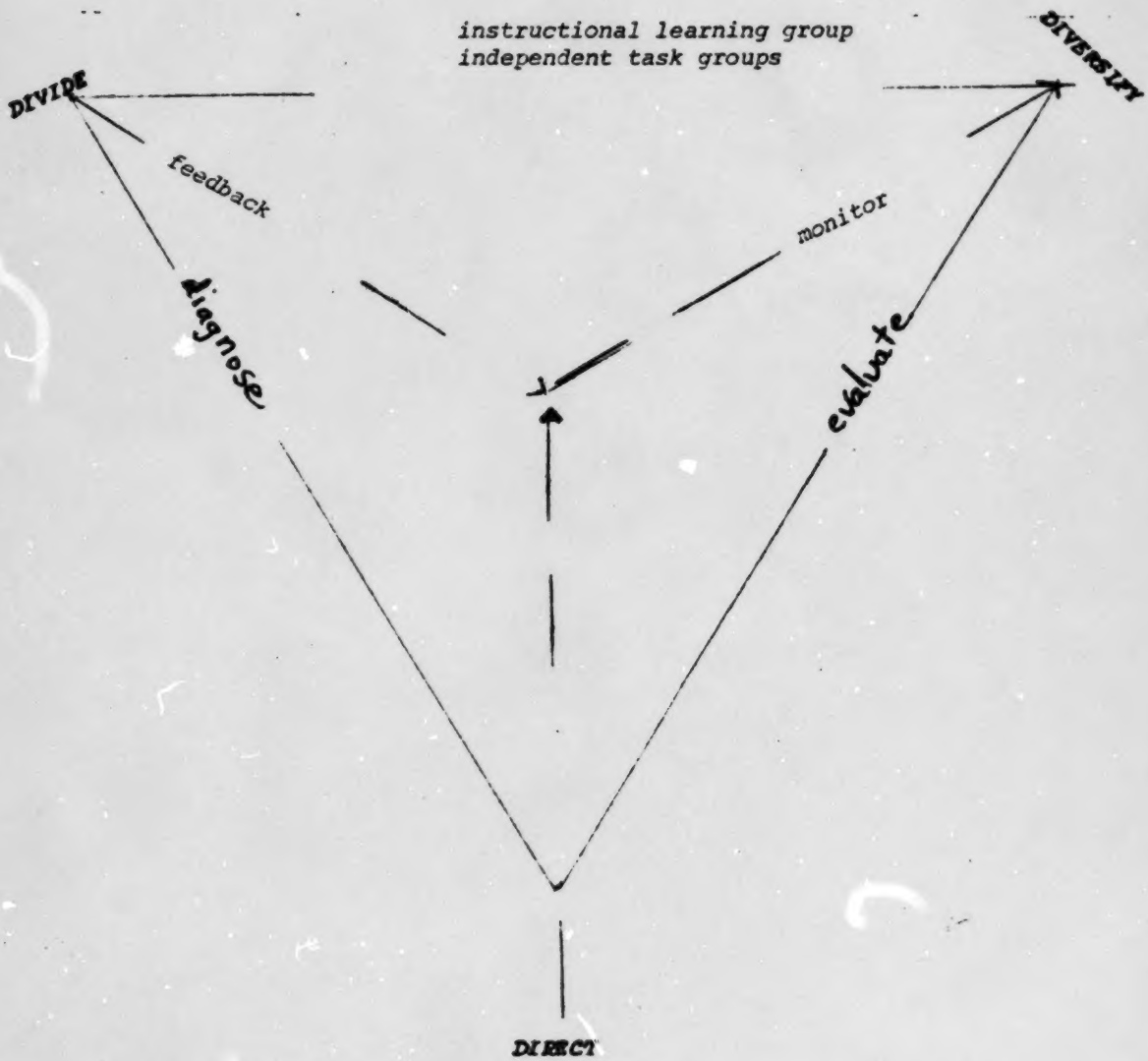
some combination of these evaluative devises.

Independent task groups, on the other hand, will pursue the completion of activities prescribed by the engaging segment of the practical 3-D model with only moderate teacher supervision. Minimal supervision is facilitated by designing a sequence of activities leading from engagement to evaluation. The latter category of activities should be provided as culminating events, able to be undertaken only upon the successful completion of a mastery task from the engagement portion of the model.

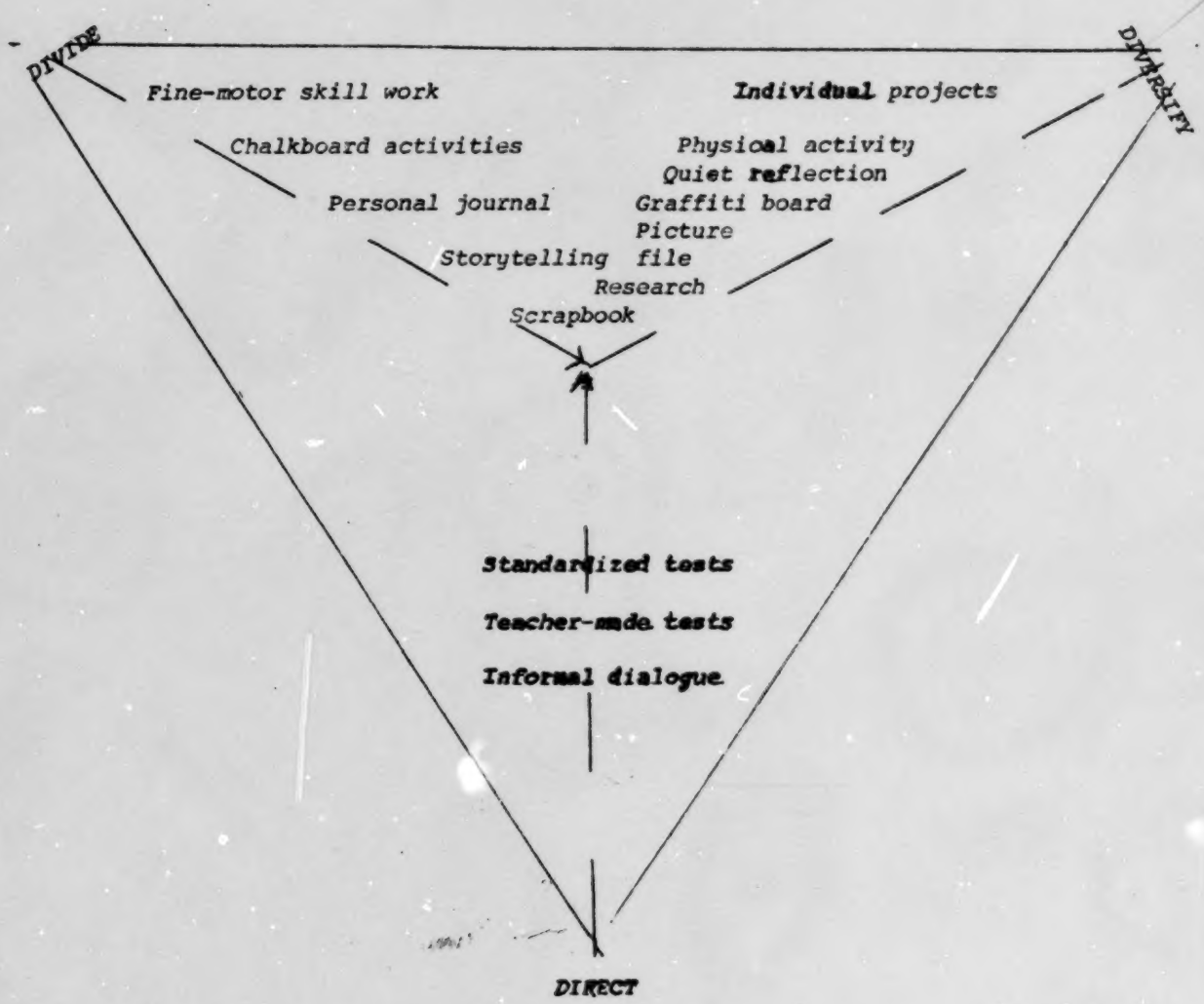
By proposing the use of our 3-D model as a devise which enhances opportunities for classroom management and instruction, we assert that a larger environment can be shaped from an earlier conventional setting.

> If children and youth of a nation are afforded opportunity to develop their capacities to the fullest, if they are given the knowledge to understand the world and the wisdom to change it, then the prospects for the future are bright (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

A THEORETICAL 3-D MODEL



A PRACTICAL 3-D MODEL



CONCEPTUAL STRATEGIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Sample One - The City

Overview

The enjoyment of numerous cultural and recreational events, the wide variety of businesses and stores, and the exciting diversity of people and cultures are all typical characteristics of most cities -- unfortunately, so are pollution, crime, poor housing, and transportation problems. Regardless of their positive or negative connotations these and many other features are important in the understanding of the concept "city".

This concept unit is designed to help children to understand the concept "city" through processes such as: comparing, inquiring, analyzing, evaluating, generalizing, and direct involvement.

Through various activities students will understand that a city is a large, important town which is usually a center of industry, commerce, politics, transportation, communication, education, recreation, and entertainment for surrounding areas. In doing so, they will discover the special features of a city which distinguish it from a rural area, and the advantages and disadvantages of city life. They will also recognize that specialization contributes to the growth of a city and vice versa, and that specialization increases interdependence. Along with

specialized jobs, and locate areas in the United States that specialize in a certain product.

Finally, students will be evaluating several problems found in cities and discussing proposals for change. This will be extended through the planning of an ideal city by the class.

In conclusion, it should be noted, as was done in the science concept unit, that a very important purpose of this unit (and hopefully all social science units) is to help the children to understand some of the generalizations and principles that will help them function in and learn about their own environment, and to acquire an understanding for cultures and environments other than their own.

Concept Analysis

Concept: City

Attributes: large important town, inhabited by a large number of people, variety of cultures, specialization of services and/or products, diversity, center of industry, center of commerce, center of education, center of transportation, center of recreation/entertainment, center of politics, contains numerous, large buildings

Definition: A large, important town in which thousands of people live and work, usually being a center of industry, commerce, politics, transportation, communication, education, recreation, and entertainment for surrounding areas.

Examples: Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, Tokyo, London

Non-examples: farm, village, rural areas, town

Related Topics: urban renewal, mass transportation, industry, specialization, community, suburb

City Life

Aims: The students will be able to:

-compare city life with rural life

-identify ten features of a city

-explain why people of varying backgrounds may choose to live in the city

Focusing Event

After forming a relaxed circle in your classroom show the children several pictures of farm scenes and city scenes. Encourage the children to discuss the differences they see. Question the children as to which area they would prefer to live. If any children in the class live in a farm area, encourage them to tell about their visits to a city; if any children live in an urban area, have them tell about their visits to a farm. Suggest that there are not only visual/environmental differences between the farm and city, but also differences such as the kinds of chores and recreational activities found. Encourage the children to discuss these differences.

In addition, students may be encouraged to discuss or find out from their parents whether they have ancestors who migrated from the farms to the cities, and their reasons for doing so.

Engagement Activities

Students will be asked to write on paper responses to one or both of the following hypothetical situations:

1) You live with your family on a farm. Your father is thinking of selling the farm and moving to the city. He asks you to help him make the decision. You have never been in the city but you have heard stories about it. You know what farm life is like. List the reasons you would like to move to the city. Then list the reasons you would like to stay on the farm. Compare your lists. Will you decide to move, or to stay?

2) You have always lived on a farm. You get a chance to visit Philadelphia (or name of another city) for the first time. Describe what you see. How is Philadelphia different from the farm you live on? What things do you like about Philadelphia? What things don't you like? Would you rather stay in Philadelphia or return to your farm? Why?

Upon completing these stories, students who live in cities will also list the things they would find difficult to do if they lived on a farm. Students who live in rural areas will list the things they would miss if they moved to the city. Students will then collect various pictures from magazines which show some of the excitement found in city life, and pictures of life on a farm.

Essays can then be displayed on a bulletin board along with the various pictures collected for a comparison of city and farm life. Essays and lists could also be used in the productionof skits where the above-mentioned hypothetical situations would be acted out.

Fieldtrips to both a farm and the city would provide direct experience for the children, if they could be arranged.

City Specialization

Aims: The students will be able to:

-recognize that specialization contributes to the growth of a city and that growth of a city leads to specialization

-infer that specialization increases interdependence

-list various types of specialized jobs/services

-locate on a map areas that specialize in a certain product

Focusing Event

Write on the board the following headings: Food, Clothing, Shelter. Have students suggest items to be placed under each heading (e.g. bread, coat, house). Encourage children to discuss the various types of jobs involved in making some of these products, leading them to discover that these items may be made by specialists.

Also, bring in an item which is familiar to the children (such as, a bathing suit) and another item which is unfamiliar to the children (such as, a snowshoe). If items are unavailable, pictures may be used. Pass the items around for the children to examine. Question the children as to which item they find to be more useful for their needs, having them explain why. Suggest

to the students that there may be areas where the unfamiliar item may be very important to the needs of people, and the item that they chose as important may not be useful. Encourage children to think of such areas.* A discussion can ensue which will lead the children to discover that for people who produce certain products to make a living, someone must buy their goods, Children should conclude that a person selling the unfamiliar object (e.g. snowshoe) would probably not be able to make a very good living in this area with their product. Then return to the original list of items on the board - allow children to discuss their ideas on where they think these specialists would most likely set up shop.

Engagement Activities

Students will choose an occupation and pretend that they have just moved to the city where they must set up a shop to sell their products. They will draw a simple sketch showing what their shop looks like. They will also indicate the type of goods they will produce, the name of their shop, and where they will locate their shop. *Students may follow this activity with a skit having some of the different workers selling their wares to others, and talking about their work day, the various steps taken in the production of their goods (this will require some research), and what they considered in choosing a location for their shop.

*Students may also collect or draw pictures of people in different occupations, or pictures illustrating various sections of a city and write a sentence to describe each picture. Pictures

of products may also be collected for students to identify the various jobs involved in the process of making the products. These pictures and descriptions can be combined for a bulletin board display on specialization.

If possible, a field trip to the post office can be arranged where students will observe the different processes involved in the handling of the mail. Other suggested trips could be to a bakery or automobile factory.

Finally, students will research a list of cities found in the United States and report on the products that these cities are known for. Small pictures of the products found could be attached to the corresponding city on a map of the United States for a bulletin board display.

City Problems

Aims: The students will be able to:

-identify problems found uniquely in the city

-suggest methods to alleviate city problems

-recognize that it takes the joint efforts of concerned people to alleviate city problems

-develop a plan for an ideal city

Focusing Event

Write the phrase "sick cities" on the board. Encourage students to explain what they think it means, and to name at least

three things that come to their minds (e.g. traffic jams,crime, pollution). Have the children compare these problems with the favorable features of a city learned in the first week. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Prompt students to suggest several more problems or reasons why they think some people may leave the city.

To motivate students in the area of resolving city problems, choose a topic - such as, litter - and bring in a picture of a litter-laden street. Question children as to what causes litter in the streets, who should clean it up, and how could it be prevented. Allow for discussion.

Engagement Activities

Students will collect and identify pictures from newspapers or magazines of unfavorable conditions associated with city living. Pretending that they are each mayors of the city, the children will then write proposals of what they would do to help alleviate or eliminate these conditions. If desired, these proposals may then be presented by the "mayors" to the class for consideration and discussion.

In the area of urban renewal, some students can inquire about and report on any urban renewal projects in the community. If possible, pictures of the affected area before and after it was rebuilt should be taken.

Also, by working together, students will plan an ideal city and make a map or build a model of their city. Students will evaluate their plan and explain the ways in which they have made their city better than the ones we have today.

Finally, students can find an ugly place in or near their school that could be cleaned and brightened. Then, working together, make it into a place everyone can enjoy!

Additional suggestions to enhance learning of the concept:

During the course of study, have several pupils compose a large chart on which they place four headings - Living Conditions, Working Conditions, Problems, City Services. As you proceed through the weeks, encourage students to volunteer to write facts that will help develop the concept "city". Posters made up of pictures illustrating the city can decorate the classroom. Also, students may write to the Chamber of Commerce in several cities for maps that list city attractions - these may be displayed in the classroom.

Sample Two - Community Development

OVERVIEW

During most of its history, the United States was a nation of farms and small towns. Only 20 percent of the American people lived in the cities at the start of the Civil War.

By 1900 the picture had changed dramatically. The population of urban, or city, areas increased five times from 6 million to 30 million. More than 40 percent of the people lived in urban areas. The population of the nation's largest cities, like New York and Chicago, rose into the millions. And sleepy little towns became cities of thousands. As one historian put it, "The United States was born in the country, and...moved into the city."

In this unit students will be introduced to the people, who populated these early cities, and learn what life and industry was like in the American city for 1865 to 1910.

Concept Analysis

Definition: - a group of people living in the same locality and under the same government.

Attributes: - the people who comprise the community
- the growth and development of the community
- the development of industrial standards for the community.

Exemplars: - city, state, town, family, tribe

Non-Exemplars: - recluses, hermits, those who remove themselves from community life.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

AIMS

Students will be able to:

- discuss the impact of migration and immigration on the growth of the American city.
- explain why so many rural inhabitants left their homes for the city.
- describe adjustments made by different ethnic groups who came to the city.

FOCUSING EVENT

Arrange students in groups of two, and give each a dittoed worksheet of the outline of the human body. Tell them that they are going to begin a study of the development of an American community. However, before they begin they should understand that a community is rather like the human body. Ask if anyone can mention what they have in common. Lead them to see that one type of community, the city, has a brain (universities and libraries), it has limbs which enable movement (busses, trolleys), it even has a heart (charitable organizations) and a soul (Churches). Now see if they can come up with any for bones (cemetaries), arteries(streets, highways), tongue(newspapers, magazines); backbone (business), and mind (the arts). When they've completed the outlines have them compare. Then tell them that as recent as a hundred years ago cities did not have many of these things.

Next display pictures or show a filmstrip which depicts life in a late nineteenth century American city. Ask class to compare and contrast life then with life in a large city today. Have them refer back to the

ditto they just completed. How many things would be deleted if you were doing an early city? What other things might you add? discuss their choices.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Have a world map somewhere in the room. Survey the class to find out where they or their ancestors came from. With colored pins show where these places are on the map. Ask them to explain why so many of us have different nationalities. How did our ancestors get here? Why did they leave their homeland? Lead them to see that many left their homelands to seek a better life in a prospering (growing) nation. Others left seeking freedom. Others still, were forced to leave as slaves. Explain that between 1865 and 1914, 25 million people came to our country. Many of these immigrants settled in the cities. Why? What was happening in the cities at this time? (Industrial age had arrived; cheap labor was needed).

Also during this period, many Americans living in the farming areas moved to the cities. Why would they move? Now divide the class in to small groups. Have each research, then represent one of the following groups who moved to an American city in the late 1800's: a Black family from rural Mississippi, a farm family from Nebraska, an Italian family, an Irish family, and a Jewish family from Eastern Europe. Have each group present a role play in three segments: the reasons and decisions to leave home, their journey and their experiences of life in the new city. Discuss the common and unique problems revealed in each role play.

CITY CHARACTERISTICS

AIMS

Students will be able to:

-identify the characteristics of the walking city and the street-car city and compare the two.

-illustrate three problems caused by city growth.

-list at least three advantages and disadvantages of city life.

Focusing Event

Divide the class into groups of three's or four's. Have each group list the different ways they have gotten from place to place in the past week. Also ask each to list the approximate distances between points, and methods used for each distance. Compile a class list and discuss. How much walking did they do? How far? What kind of transportation did they use most frequently? Why?

Engagement Activity

Show a map or depiction of New York City in 1846 and in 1890. Tell the class that the city limits in 1846 were two miles (it could be walked in less than a half an hour). In 1890 the citywide limits had more than doubled. What caused this growth?) (migration and immigration). How do you think the majority of the people got arand the city in 1846? (walking) By 1890, however, what developments had occurred in technology that might have affected transportation, thus enabling people to travel across town in a shorter amount of time? (invention of the steam engine, which made railroads possible, also the use of horse drawn trolleys set in rails).

By the late 1800's cities no longer had to settle around one central point. It was no longer necessary for business owners to leave near their establishments. Cities were no longer walking cities, they were streetcar cities. With the tremendous growth of these cities, what do you think might be the major concern of the people moving there? (housing) Who might have been hurt by the housing shortages the most? (the poor) What might the middle and upper classes be able to do now that streetcars and railroads were available to them? (move to the fringes as well as the suburbs of the city? Who then would be left to make up and keep up the inner city community? (the poor, immigrants and minorities).

Explain that as the wealthier inhabitants left the cities, poor residents rented apartments converted from houses, over-crowded shoddily kept. What problems might such overcrowding present? (disease, as well as great fires which often destroyed whole sections of cities). Again since many of these inner city dwellers were immigrants, what special problems might they face in trying to survive? (little or no knowledge of the English language, inappropriate job skills).

As an assignment to determine the difference between a walking and a streetcar city, have each student do some outside research on life in a 19th century city. Then have them act as a newspaper reporter and write an article on how the city changed from a walking to streetcar city and its implications on the poor.

AIMS

Students will be able to:

-trace the development of labor unions and give reasons for their formation.

-differentiate the working conditions of children in th late 19th century from contemporary conditions.

FOCUSING EVENT

Ask how many students have jobs? What kind of jobs? How much do you earn? What kind of hours do you work? Tell the class they are going to see some pictures (or a filmstrip, movie) which depicts a factory worker's job about ninety years ago. After viewing ask What age do the workers seem to be? (very young children to very old people) What are their working conditions like? (over crowded, insufficient lighting, fire hazards). What type of people would work under such conditions? (poor, unskilled, immigrants). Do you think they were well paid? Why do you think they stayed there?

Explain that the government did not involve itself in business matters and there were no labor unions to govern the age of the worker, the number of hours worked or the money paid. Children as young as four years old worked in factories from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with only 20 minutes break for lunch. Ask if anyone knows what exist today that prevent such occurrences (laws, unions)

If no one mentions labor unions, write on the board and ask if anyone knows what labor unions do today and why they were even more important a hundred years ago.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Remind students that the 19th century was an age of city growth due to immigration and migration, as well as industrial growth. America was changing from a farming society to an industrial one. The cities provided the unskilled with jobs, no matter how low the pay or bad the working conditions.

Who do you think determined the hours and the pay of the workers? (the owners of the factories and mills). Why would they be unwilling to change these conditions? (they wouldn't make as much money). Since government didn't like to interfer in big business, up until 1869 owners were free to treat their workers as they chose.

Break the class into groups. One is to do research on the early union, Kinights of Labor. They are to find out who founded them, who they represented, the goals, activities and its fate. Another will do the same with the AFL. A third group will reserach conditions and grievances of the 19th century workers, and the last group will search out information on business owners of that time. When research is completed, each group will select a representative to present the group's ideas, grievances, and goals to the class.

REFERENCES

Martorella, Peter, Concept Learning: Design for Instruction.

Good, Thomas, Looking in Classrooms. NY: Harper and Row, 1972, pp. 174-175.

"Schools Using Time-on-Task Research", ASCD Update, Vol. 22, No. 5, November, 1980.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie, Two Worlds of Childhood. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970, page 1.